

Webrooming, Showrooming & Situational Channel Use In Herbal Cosmetics Evidence from Indian Consumers

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Abstract

Purpose: This study is designed to explore the webrooming, showrooming, situational channel switching of herbal cosmetic products as well as to understand the motives for cross channel shopping. **Design/methodology/approach:** A cross-sectional survey generated 812 responses. Of these, 578 responses were deemed eligible and complete and thus were retained. For primary channel choice, the measures of webrooming and showrooming were directly measured by asking why they select the channel and the reasons were analysed descriptively. The key proportions were estimated by the use of 95% confidence intervals. Qualitative results were complemented with a thematic analysis of the 561 open-ended, nonscored responses, using a dictionary. **Findings:** Webrooming was reported by 48.4% of respondents (95% CI [44.4%, 52.5%]), whereas showrooming was reported by 32.2% (95% CI [28.5%, 36.1%]). When asked to choose their primary channel, 66.4% responded with a channel via both online and offline, and/or a conditional channel, with 33.6% choosing an exclusive online or offline main channel. Quality and effectiveness, reviews and recommendations, ingredients and safety, trust and brand reputation, and convenience and availability were the most frequently identified considerations. The integrated evidence is consistent with digital touchpoints supporting information search and social validation, while stores support sensory inspection and interpersonal assurance. **Research limitations/implications:** The cross-sectional, non-probability design supports estimation and contextual interpretation, not causal inference. The available analytical file did not permit respondent-level joint classification of webrooming and showrooming. **Originality/value:** The study extends omnichannel research to herbal cosmetics by integrating directly reported cross-channel behaviour with consumer-generated purchase priorities. It conceptualizes situational switching as a functional allocation of information, sensory, assurance and transaction needs across touchpoints.

Keywords: herbal cosmetics; webrooming; showrooming; omnichannel customer journey; channel switching; sensory evaluation; online reviews; India

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Research highlights

- Webrooming was reported more frequently than showrooming in the herbal cosmetics sample.
- Two-thirds of respondents reported equal-channel or condition-dependent channel choice.
- The integrated evidence is consistent with online channels supporting information and social validation, while stores support sensory and interpersonal assurance.
- Quality, reviews, safety, trust and convenience dominated consumer-generated purchase considerations.
- Cross-channel behaviour can be understood as journey integration across complementary touchpoints.

1. Introduction

Omnichannel retailing has shifted attention from the final transaction to the complete customer journey. Consumers can discover products, search for information, compare alternatives, inspect products and complete purchases through different channels. The sequence is not necessarily linear, and the channel hosting the transaction may not be the channel that created product awareness, confidence or preference. Customer-journey research therefore emphasizes the cumulative role of touchpoints rather than evaluating channels in isolation (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Neslin, 2022; Verhoef et al., 2015).

Webrooming and showrooming are visible expressions of cross-channel behaviour. Webrooming occurs when consumers search or evaluate products online and purchase offline. Showrooming occurs when consumers inspect products in a physical environment and purchase online. These behaviours have become central themes in

omnichannel research because they redistribute information, experience and transaction functions across channels (Halibas et al., 2023; Huh & Kim, 2022).

Herbal cosmetics provide a particularly relevant setting. Consumers can access ingredient descriptions, product claims, reviews, ratings and price comparisons digitally, yet fragrance, texture, packaging and perceived suitability often require direct inspection. Claims of herbal authenticity, ingredient purity, safety and effectiveness can also create uncertainty. The consumer may therefore use the internet for search and social evidence while relying on a store for inspection, or inspect a product in a store and later order online for convenience or price.

The green and natural cosmetics literature has concentrated primarily on purchase intention, attitude, environmental concern and health consciousness. Reviews of the field identify product, marketing, brand, value, experience, knowledge and barrier-related

determinants, but call for stronger behavioural measures and context-specific investigation (Amberg & Fogarassy, 2019; Limbu & Ahamed, 2023). Cross-channel search-and-purchase sequences remain less developed, particularly in the Indian herbal cosmetics context.

Recent segmentation research shows that omnichannel consumers differ in their switching behaviour and journey requirements. Digital switchers, webroomers, showroomers and offline switchers may require different experience designs (Nguyen et al., 2024). Product price and consumer segment can also alter cross-channel usage, while sensory preferences and motivational orientation shape the likelihood and consequences of webrooming and showrooming (Dhara et al., 2026; Sharma & Fatima, 2025).

The present study examines directly reported webrooming and showrooming among 578 herbal cosmetics consumers. It also considers the distribution of primary channel choice, reasons for selecting channels and open-ended statements concerning the most important purchase factor. Rather than claiming latent causal mechanisms unsupported by the measurement data, the paper integrates observed behaviours with descriptive and thematic evidence.

The study contributes in four ways. First, it establishes the prevalence of cross-channel behaviour in herbal cosmetics. Second, it describes the complementary functions associated with digital and physical touchpoints. Third, it integrates structured survey evidence with respondent-generated purchase considerations. Fourth, it frames cross-channel behaviour as a functional allocation of information, sensory, assurance and transaction requirements rather than as evidence of inconsistent preference.

The pace of digital technology has dramatically transformed the retail landscape, changing the way customers buy goods from primarily physical stores to an increasingly hybrid in-store and online shopping experience. Today's consumers aren't just consumers on one channel—they switch between websites, social, mobile apps, retail stores and other channels based on the information they need, product type, risk they are taking, convenience and context for purchase. This shift has paving the way for the adoption of omnichannel commerce, where customers interact with numerous channels throughout the purchase journey. In their extensive study of omnichannel customer experience, some highlighted the increasing importance of understanding the customer's journey on interconnected channels rather than on a single channel. Similarly, some highlighted the continued transformation of the retail industry through the convergence of channels and changing consumer behavior (Salvietti, 2023; Chen, 2022; Gereja et al., 2021).

In the changing retail landscape, webrooming and showrooming have emerged as significant types of cross-channel customer activity. Webrooming refers to

when customers compare or investigate items online before making a purchase in a retail store, while showrooming implies that customers look at or examine items in the store before making a purchase online. These operations suggest that the information retrieval, the evaluation of the products and the eventual purchase process can not necessarily follow one direction. Webrooming and showrooming are part of a multi-phase consumer decision-making process, suggesting that different channels can be used at different touchpoints along the consumer buying process (Mukherjee et al., 2021). Similarly, some correlated the webrooming behavior with technology-enforced economic behavior and customers' willingness to share personal data in online shopping situations (Urbonavičius & Degutis, 2023).

The characteristics of the customer journey and the nature of the buying process also influence the cross between digital and physical channels. Some emphasize the significance of touchpoint selection in high-involvement customer journeys, suggesting that customers may choose for certain touchpoints based on their motives and anticipated value from such engagements (Pine & Weber, 2020). Studies also show the importance of omnichannel promotions and their relation with customer satisfaction, and examined the integration's quality in multichannel service situations. These perspectives frame the customer's preferences for channels as a more complex issue than it is often presented as, namely a binary option between online and offline. Consumers might be able to use each channel for some things and switch from one to another channel as their requirements change (Blom et al., 2021; Hossain, 2020).

The importance of consumer behaviour in omnichannel environments is particularly relevant for certain product categories that require a lot of information and direct product evaluation. In one area, herbal cosmetics and green cosmetics, the customer will want to know what ingredients are used, how the product works, if it is safe, how good and effective it is, and they will value the opportunity to examine the product first-hand. Research on sustainable cosmetics has increasingly turned to understanding the motivations of customers when they purchase cosmetics and the impact of the internet's communication. A study underscores the need for understanding consumer decision-making in the green cosmetics industry, as it continues to be a critical consideration in understanding the factors influencing purchase intentions among young female consumers in Vietnam (Limbu et al., 2022). It is also investigated that the influence of digital communication tactics on consumers' intentions to buy eco-friendly cosmetics, emphasising the significance of online communication in moulding customer reactions to these items (Teixeira et al., 2023).

Cross-channel activity could also be influenced by consumer risk perceptions and what they have learned about others from consumers. Study examined the underlying motivation of luxury webrooming, with consideration of moderating factors, such as perceived risk and reviews. The research is pertinent to comprehending how consumers' assessments of information and uncertainty might affect their propensity to participate in webrooming (Akram & Lavuri, 2024). Online assessment questions can thus play a significant role in customer decision-making when they are looking for confirmation of the quality, fit or effectiveness of products that need it. A study emphasized the importance of digital information in the context of online communication strategies in the field of green cosmetics (Teixeira et al., 2023).

Despite the increasing attention to webrooming and showrooming as well as omnichannel commerce, it is crucial to understand the way customers combine these behaviours in some product categories. Research is currently underway on the omnichannel customer experience, channel integration, customer switching, digital technologies, and eco-friendly cosmetics in various perspectives (Gerea et al., 2021; Mukherjee et al., 2021; Limbu et al., 2022; Salvietti, 2023; Mishra et al., 2025). However, these research fields do not necessarily offer a coherent understanding of the ways in which customers allocate different types of activities—information seeking, product evaluation, buying—to the online and physical domains in the context of herbal cosmetics. The issue is especially pertinent since customers may not exhibit a consistent inclination for online or physical shopping. The channels they select can differ according to the features of the product, their perceived risks, information requirements, evaluations, convenience or the stage in the buying process.

Therefore, this research explores the concept of “webrooming” and “showrooming” and situational channel switching in the case of herbal cosmetics buyers. To understand the prevalence of those cross-channel behaviours and the extent to which customers interact with online and offline channels in isolation, together and conditionally. The research also examines attributes of these behaviours including the product quality, information, reviews, safety, trust, authenticity, ease, and availability. The study highlights the specific category of herbal cosmetics, as it widens the focus of the study on omnichannel behavior beyond the scope of traditional purchases and offers a category-specific perspective for the distribution of the information search, product evaluation and purchase behavior among the different channels.

2. Literature review and research questions

2.1 Webrooming and showrooming

Webrooming uses online channels as search and evaluation environments before an offline purchase. Consumers can compare prices, examine product descriptions, read reviews and reduce the search cost of visiting stores. Then there is the physical proof, immediate possession or interpersonal help of the store. The Webrooming phenomenon takes part in a consumer process that leverages the Internet to minimize consumer uncertainty and does not supplant the value of the physical experience.

Showrooming reverses the sequence, consumers inspect products offline and complete the transaction online. Physical stores may provide touch, trial, demonstration and advice, while online channels provide price transparency, assortment, convenience or delivery. The showrooming consumer extracts experiential value from the store but assigns transaction value to the digital channel. Webrooming and showrooming are not mirror images. Research suggests that different curiosity, innovativeness, sensory and motivational mechanisms can underlie the two behaviours (Dhara et al., 2026; Huh & Kim, 2022). Their relative prevalence may also depend on product price, channel familiarity and the degree to which sensory evaluation is required (Sharma & Fatima, 2025).

Examples of the cross channels customer activity were webrooming and showrooming. Webrooming was when shoppers looked online before purchasing products in the store, while showrooming was when they evaluated products in the store before committing to an online purchase. These actions indicated that customers did not fully engage in the whole decision-making process via a single channel. A study conceptualized webrooming and showrooming as part of a multi-stage consumer decision-making process thus implying that customers utilized a number of channels throughout different stages of their decision making process (Mukherjee et al., 2021). Another study showed webrooming as a phenomenon linked to the impact of technology on economic behavior and customers' willingness to share personal information while conducting online transactions (Urbonavičius & Degutis, 2023). Building on the work of Akram and (Lavuri, 2024), this paper examined the purpose behind luxury webrooming and assessed the effects of perceived risk and reviews.

RQ1: How prevalent are webrooming and showrooming among herbal cosmetics consumers?

2.2 Situational channel choice

Channel choice is influenced by consumer needs, product characteristics, perceived channel attributes and transaction conditions (Wolf & Steul-Fischer, 2023). A fixed online or offline preference is therefore unlikely to describe all consumers. Equal-channel users may distribute purchases across channels, while conditional consumers may switch according to product, brand, price, availability or urgency.

Omnichannel segmentation research confirms that consumers construct different journey patterns and require distinct channel features (Nguyen et al., 2024). The relevant managerial problem is not to force all consumers into one channel, but to identify what each channel contributes to the journey and where friction occurs during switching. Some studies investigated behavioural intentions about omnichannel services, while some illustrated how technology affordances provided more motivations for customers to engage with businesses across several channels. As such, flipping the channel was interpreted as an intuitive decision based on the consumer's immediate needs, not merely as a reflection of demographic and/or channel preference differences (Mishra et al., 2025; Naeem et al., 2026).

Consumers do not have a preference for one channel, but rather favor the channel based on a situational need. Studies pointed to the importance of the role of the consumer incentives in the selection of touchpoints throughout the high involvement customer journey. Their viewpoint indicated that the choice of a certain channel relied on the requirements customers had from that touchpoint at a certain phase of the decision-making process (Pine & Weber, 2020). Studies also examined the factors influencing customers' intentions to convert to contactless transactions via the push-pull-mooring model. This gave a great theoretical foundation to understand the motivation of the customers switching channels (Jeong, 2022). Some illustrated that alterations after the pandemic affected the dynamics between physical businesses and e-commerce platforms, indicating that consumer buying behaviours transformed persistently in both tangible and virtual realms (Aryannejad, 2025).

RQ2: To what extent is primary channel choice exclusive, equal-channel, or condition-dependent?

2.3 Information, sensory and assurance functions

Digital channels offer convenience, information, comparisons and internet reviews. Reviews might include attributes that are not listed in product descriptions, but the quality of the platform and the quality of the review (Sung et al., 2023; Bhat & Darzi, 2021) is also taken into account by consumers. One of the essential aspects of contemporary consumer choice was the acquisition of information. Consumer were able to review products, gain extensive product information, and read user-generated content before purchasing. Studies presented the relationship between technology-influenced consumer behaviour, online shopping and webrooming. Their research indicated that digital settings may have played a more important role with customers before they made their purchase (Urbonavičius & Degutis, 2023). There was a lot to be gained from customer evaluations. One study examined the impact of reviews and perceived risk on the intention to participate in luxury webrooming and found that the information and risk aspects are crucial for

cross-channel decision making. While other showed the importance of digital communication strategies on the purchase intentions of customers in the field of "eco-friendly cosmetics (Akram & Lavuri, 2024; Xie et al., 2023).

Physical channels help to aid sensory information. Cosmetic features of a product are the fragrance, texture, colour, feel, appearance and packaging. According to the sensory marketing research, the sensory clues have impact on the perception and judgment (Krishna, 2010). Assistance may be provided by the salesperson in addition to sensory evaluation to reinforce the ingredients, usage and suitability, particularly in a customer driven interaction (Bateman & Valentine, 2015). Customers' first-hand experience with a product was a particular factor when perceived risk was high. Under these conditions, shoppers used online evaluations and other digital information channels to mitigate ambiguity prior to visiting a brick-and-mortar establishment or finalising an online transaction. This provided a potential link between information retrieval, perceived risk and the resulting purchase medium selection.

Trust and risk cross over both environments. In terms of brands, it's always a safe bet to go with an official website or trusted store, and both of these sources can instill doubts. Authenticity, performance, physical reaction, monetary value and misleading claims of the cosmetic products are all involved in the case of herbal cosmetic products. Trust can contribute to a consumer's selection of a credible seller, and risk can drive consumers to look for further verification (both online and offline), (Ariffin et al., 2018; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001).

RQ3: What purchase considerations accompany cross-channel behaviour in herbal cosmetics?

2.4 Consumer-generated purchase priorities

Open ended responses may be able to provide information that is not congruent with the item that it is being asked to answer. All of the above may apply at one time. These responses also complement the behavioural frequencies to provide further insight into consumer split between channels in search, evaluation and purchase. To better understand consumers' motivations in the green cosmetics industry, a study focused on the factors that affected the purchase intention of green cosmetics among young female customers in Vietnam. While other one explored the strategies of online communication and their effect on customers' purchase intentions regarding eco-friendly cosmetics, highlighting the importance of digital communication in shaping consumer behavior (Limbu et al., 2022; Teixeira et al., 2023).

Digital technology's emergence made the way customers evaluate the choices and make their buying decision. Language acquisition occurred online, they went to brick-and-mortar shops to evaluate products,

visited online to compare products and services, and completed the transaction on any platform. The relevance of understanding behavioural intentions for omnichannel services among Generation Y customers and the role of technology affordances such as Scan and Go apps in enabling new types of interactive buying behaviours were highlighted by (Mishra et al., 2025; Naeem et al., 2026), respectively. Omnichannel shopping was therefore perceived as more than just having multiple channels, it was considered a consumer-centric activity and using multiple channels that are connected.

However, studies to date on the adoption of ecologically friendly cosmetics have been based more on purchase intentions, perceptions of consumers and communications, rather than considering how consumers integrated online and offline channels throughout the shopping process. It enabled an examination of the difference in the functioning of webrooming, showrooming, and situational channel switching in the herbal cosmetics segment.

RQ4: How do consumer-generated purchase priorities contextualize the complementary roles of digital and physical channels?

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design and sample

This study used quantitative, descriptive and cross sectional survey methods. They were asked to be included in the study if they were aged 18 years and above, consumers of herbal cosmetics and knew of any point to buy the products from online and offline media. Raw responses from the survey amounted to 812. 640 eligible respondents were screened. The integrated behavioural analysis excluded 41 measurement items and 62 eligible cases that had incomplete answers, leaving 578 complete eligible respondents. The sample size was larger than anticipated—with on-line and off-line consumers, as well as equal-channel/conditional consumers.

The pilot survey contained 47 raw responses, of which 30 met the eligibility criteria. Because the same questionnaire was retained, eligible pilot responses remained in the cumulative dataset and were not counted twice.

3.2 Measures

Webrooming was measured through a direct question asking whether the respondent had searched for herbal cosmetic products online and subsequently purchased them offline. Showrooming was measured through a direct question asking whether the respondent had examined herbal cosmetic products offline and subsequently purchased them online. Response categories were yes, no and not sure.

Primary channel choice was recorded as online, offline, both channels equally, or dependent on product, brand, price or availability. Respondents also selected the principal reason for their preferred channel from options covering convenience, authenticity, product quality,

availability, physical examination, discounts, information, reviews, comparison, salesperson guidance and store trust.

The optional open-ended question asked respondents to identify the most important factor considered while purchasing herbal cosmetic products. A total of 561 respondents provided a nonblank answer.

3.3 Analytical procedure

Frequencies and percentages were calculated for webrooming, showrooming and primary channel choice. The paper does not test a paired statistical difference between webrooming and showrooming because the respondent-level joint cross-classification was not used in the available analytical output. The two prevalences are therefore compared descriptively rather than inferentially.

The open-ended responses were coded using a dictionary-assisted framework. Seven themes were developed: product quality and effectiveness; reviews and recommendations; ingredients and safety; trust and brand reputation; convenience and availability; authenticity and organic purity; and price and value for money. A response could receive more than one theme. Candidate keyword assignments were reviewed contextually, and ambiguous fragments were not forced into a category.

The thematic analysis was supplementary. It was not designed as an independent qualitative study and did not include a second coder or an intercoder reliability coefficient. The results were used to contextualize observed channel behaviour.

3.4 Ethical and analytical safeguards

Participation was voluntary, eligibility screening was applied and respondent identifiers were excluded from the analytical dataset. The research synopsis and associated safeguards were reviewed through the School of Management Research Degree Committee process. The paper reports only analyses supported by the retained data and avoids causal claims, paired webrooming-versus-showrooming comparisons and respondent-level switching segments that could not be reconstructed from the available analytical output.

4. Results

4.1 Primary channel choice

Table 1. Primary channel choice among respondents

Primary channel choice	Frequency	Percentage
Online channel	116	20.1
Offline channel	78	13.5
Both channels equally	188	32.5
Depends on	196	33.9

Primary channel choice	Frequency	Percentage
product, brand, price or availability		
Total	578	100.0

Note. Wilson score 95% confidence intervals are reported in the text for key proportions.

Only 33.6% of respondents selected an exclusive online or offline primary channel. The remaining 66.4% either used both channels equally or selected a channel conditionally. Conditional consumers formed the largest individual category. These results show that flexible channel use was the modal pattern in the sample.

4.2 Webrooming

Table 2. Reported webrooming behaviour

Webrooming response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	280	48.4
No	215	37.2
Not sure	83	14.4
Total	578	100.0

Note. Wilson score 95% confidence intervals are reported in the text for key proportions.

Nearly half of the respondents reported online search followed by offline purchase (48.4%, 95% CI [44.4%, 52.5%]). Digital touchpoints therefore contributed to offline transactions by supporting product discovery, ingredient review, comparison, reviews and pre-store evaluation.

4.3 Showrooming

Table 3. Reported showrooming behaviour

Showrooming response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	186	32.2
No	275	47.6
Not sure	117	20.2
Total	578	100.0

Note. Wilson score 95% confidence intervals are reported in the text for key proportions.

Almost one-third reported offline examination followed by online purchase (32.2%, 95% CI [28.5%, 36.1%]). Although the point estimate for showrooming was lower than that for webrooming, the study does not infer a paired statistical difference because the respondent-level joint table was unavailable. Stores nevertheless contributed product contact and sensory evaluation even when the final transaction occurred online.

4.4 Reasons for primary channel choice

Table 4. Principal reason for primary channel choice

Principal reason	Frequency	Percentage
Convenience	108	18.7
Authenticity assurance	94	16.3
Product quality	94	16.3
Product availability	70	12.1
Physical product examination	56	9.7
Better offers or discounts	56	9.7
Better product information	28	4.8
Online reviews and ratings	27	4.7
Ease of comparison	20	3.5
Salesperson guidance	14	2.4
Trust in store	11	1.9

No single reason dominated channel choice. Authenticity, quality, availability, inspection, benefits related to price, and convenience were all other common answers. The distribution pattern can follow a scheme of selecting a channel based on the benefit to the given transaction of the channel.

4.5 Open-ended themes

Table 5. Themes in open-ended purchase considerations

Theme	Mentions	Percentage of 561 nonblank responses
Product quality and effectiveness	109	19.4
Reviews and recommendations	108	19.3
Ingredients and safety	105	18.7
Trust and brand reputation	102	18.2
Convenience and availability	95	16.9
Authenticity and organic purity	49	8.7
Price and value for money	49	8.7

Note. Multiple themes could be assigned to one response; percentages therefore do not sum to 100%. Percentages exceed 100% when summed because multiple themes could be assigned to one response. The leading themes were closely distributed. The responses indicate that convenience was not the only consideration; product performance, social information, safety and trust were also prominent.

4.6 Integrated interpretation

Table 6. Functional contributions of digital and physical channels

Journey requirement	Digital-channel contribution	Physical-channel contribution
Information acquisition	Product descriptions, ingredients, ratings, reviews and comparison	Salesperson explanation and local product knowledge
Uncertainty reduction	Peer feedback, official brand content and seller information	Direct inspection, visible seller accountability and interpersonal clarification
Sensory	Images and	Texture,

Journey requirement	Digital-channel contribution	Physical-channel contribution
evaluation	descriptions provide limited proxies	fragrance, appearance and packaging can be inspected directly
Transaction efficiency	Ordering convenience, delivery, assortment and price comparison	Immediate possession, local availability and direct problem resolution
Authenticity assurance	Official websites, verified sellers and digital verification	Reputed stores, pharmacies and physical examination

Note. This table provides an interpretive synthesis of the survey findings and literature; it is not an independently tested measurement model.

The integrated evidence is consistent with consumers using digital channels to support information search before physical confirmation and using stores to support sensory evaluation before online ordering. These are interpretive inferences from the observed distributions and thematic evidence, not tests of causal mediation.

5. Discussion

5.1 Webrooming and the role of digital information

Webrooming was reported by 48.4% of respondents. Herbal cosmetics consumers can obtain substantial pre-purchase information online, including ingredient descriptions, product claims, user reviews and price comparisons. However, the final purchase may remain offline because consumers want to inspect packaging, evaluate sensory qualities, obtain advice or verify product genuineness.

Recent studies examined the significance of information acquired via digital platforms prior to customers reaching their ultimate purchasing choice, they illustrate the significance of perceived risk and evaluations in relation to webrooming intention (Akram & Lavuri, 2024), whereas some investigated technology-influenced online purchasing behaviour and webrooming (Urbonavičius & Degutis, 2023). Another study explicitly illustrated the significance of digital communication tactics in influencing the intention to purchase eco-friendly cosmetics (Teixeira et al., 2023). The findings indicate that customers significantly depend on internet information, reviews, or digital communication prior to acquiring herbal cosmetics.

The pattern is consistent with the channel providing informational value differing from the channel

completing the sale. Digital performance therefore should not be evaluated only through online conversion; online content can also support pre-visit information acquisition and confidence. The degree to which consumers investigate, assess, and acquire products via various channels. Studies define webrooming and showrooming as multi-phase consumer decision-making processes, establishing a robust framework for analysing results related to consumers who explore one channel yet buy through another (Mukherjee et al., 2021). Some additionally associate webrooming with technology-influenced buying habits. If the consumers indicate significant webrooming, showrooming, or a combination of both, the results may be interpreted as proof that channel selection varies across the various phases of the consumer decision-making process instead of being static (Urbonavičius & Degutis, 2023).

The result is also consistent with the interaction of search and experience attributes. Reviews can provide information about other users' experiences, but they do not fully substitute for direct evaluation of fragrance, texture or personal suitability. Webrooming therefore allows consumers to combine scalable information with physical evaluation and local assurance.

5.2 Showrooming and the role of physical evaluation

Showrooming was reported by 32.2% of respondents. Physical stores are still relevant due to trial, inspection and consultation. Once the uncertainty is reduced, the consumer may be willing to purchase online because of price, availability or home delivery/convenience. This segment explores the enduring significance of brick-and-mortar establishments despite the rise of online retail. It demonstrated that consumers choose various touchpoints based on their motivations, whereas some investigated customer experiences linked to people revisiting physical locations via digital-native brand stores. Meanwhile some examines the significance of physical retail for digitally-native enterprises (Krantz & Johansson 2025; Trino, 2020). The research reveals that consumers frequent brick-and-mortar stores to examine, contrast, or assess herbal cosmetic goods before to buying, the discourse might highlight the synergistic rather than adversarial roles of physical and digital platforms.

The study suggests that the nature of webrooming and showrooming can vary in terms of tendencies, as it is impacted by the sensory preferences, motivational orientation, product price and consumer segment (Dhara et al., 2026; Sharma & Fatima, 2025). In the case of herbal cosmetics, familiarity with the product will also probably be important. First purchase may be at the store, and repeat purchase may be via the internet.

When the sale is made online, the brick-and-mortar retail store still has value: Showrooming. Retailers and brands can respond by integrating in-store and digital purchasing through in-store ordering, consistent loyalty benefits, transparent pricing and fulfilment options.

5.3 Situational switching rather than fixed preference

The 66.4% share of equal-channel and conditional consumers provides the broader behavioural context. A substantial majority of respondents did not identify one exclusive primary channel; many reported using both channels equally or choosing according to product, brand, price or availability. This pattern is consistent with literature showing that situational factors and perceived channel characteristics influence channel choice (Wolf & Steul-Fischer, 2023). The consumers are progressively integrating online and offline channels instead of perceiving them as separate options. Studies assert that the omnichannel customer experience revolves around interconnected consumer touchpoints, they also highlight channel integration as a vital aspect of omnichannel shopping. Studies also emphasises the significance of integration quality in multichannel services (Salvietti, 2023; Gereá et al., 2021; Hossain, 2020). If the consumers utilise both digital and brick-and-mortar avenues during a single buying experience, it can be seen as proof of a more cohesive rather than channel-exclusive purchasing method.

Studies underscore the significance of consumer incentives in influencing touchpoint selection during high-involvement experiences (Pine & Weber, 2020). Some offers a valuable framework for understanding consumers' intentions to switch across buying contexts using the push-pull-mooring lens (Jeong, 2022). Others emphasises the alterations in consumer buying behaviours between brick-and-mortar establishments and e-commerce platforms post-pandemic (Aryannejad, 2025). The results can thus be analysed about whether consumers change channels due to convenience, information accessibility, product assessment, pricing, trustworthiness, availability, or other contextual factors. Consumer segmentation should therefore distinguish between channel exclusivity and flexible journey behaviour. Omnichannel consumers with different switching patterns require different experiences, as shown by work identifying digital switchers, webroomers, showroomers and offline switchers (Nguyen et al., 2024). The present study does not construct a respondent-level joint segment typology because the joint webrooming-showrooming cross-tabulation was not available in the final analytical output. Instead, it establishes the need for such segmentation in future research.

5.4 Purchase priorities and cross-channel journeys

The open-ended findings contextualize the considerations that may accompany cross-channel use. Product quality and effectiveness was the most frequent theme, closely followed by reviews, ingredients and safety, trust and convenience. These priorities are compatible with different channel capabilities: reviews and comparison can be accessed digitally at scale, while product inspection and salesperson consultation are more directly available in physical settings.

Studies examined the extent to which consumer traits affect webrooming, showrooming, and channel selections. Some focus on the behavioural intentions about omnichannel offerings within Generation Y consumers. While some examine the purchasing intentions for green cosmetics among young female consumers, establishing a pertinent foundation for analysing demographic and consumer-profile variations (Mishra et al., 2025; Limbu et al., 2022). The findings reveal variations based on age, gender, experience, digital proficiency, or purchase tendencies, those discrepancies may be juxtaposed with these research. The problems that cross over channels are authenticity and safety. Official digital media content, real sellers and a physical check of the product and a store can assist in proving authenticity and add to confidence. Trust is therefore not owned by one channel. It is constructed through consistent product, seller and brand signals across the journey.

Price and value were less frequent than quality, reviews and safety in the open-ended responses, but they may become important at the transaction stage. This provides a plausible context for why a consumer may research or inspect in one channel and purchase in another: the channel that supports confidence need not be the channel offering the preferred transaction conditions.

6. Theoretical contributions

First, the study contributes product-category evidence on cross-channel behaviour. Herbal cosmetics combine search, experience and credence characteristics, making them a useful setting for examining how information, physical evaluation and transaction functions are distributed across channels.

Second, the paper integrates directly reported cross-channel behaviours with consumer-generated purchase priorities. This combination shows both the prevalence of switching-related behaviours and the considerations that accompany consumers' journeys.

Third, the findings support an empirically grounded interpretation of channel roles. Digital and physical touchpoints appear to support different journey functions, with webrooming and showrooming reflecting the distribution of discovery, verification, sensory evaluation and transaction activities across channels.

Fourth, the study highlights the importance of situational channel use. Equal-channel and conditional consumers cannot be adequately represented by a single exclusive channel preference because their reported choices vary with product, brand, price or availability.

Fifth, the work extends the green cosmetics literature beyond intention. Systematic reviews have called for stronger behavioural evidence and broader contextual analysis (Limbu & Ahamed, 2023). Direct reports of webrooming, showrooming and primary channel choice respond to that need.

7. Managerial implications

Brands and retailers should evaluate the complete consumer journey rather than attributing value only to the final transaction channel. Digital information can support an offline purchase, while a physical-store interaction can contribute to a later online purchase.

The Webroomers' consumers must obtain appropriate info online and be assured of a smooth switch to the availability offline. Digital research can be followed with Store Locators, local inventory and the other new digital features such as 'reserve in store', click and collect, consistent product description etc., which ensure a proper offline purchase.

For the showroomers, they must be noticed at every interaction. QR code, saved product list, in store digital ordering, one loyalty, home delivery, price transparency would keep the customer in the brand/retriever ecosystem.

Retail stores should concentrate on products that are not available online. Herbal cosmetics can be evaluated by tests, which can assist the role of testers, samples, credible product demonstrations and trained assistance.

Digital channels should be more diagnostic in terms of their reviews. Useful social information can be derived from checking product labels, skin filters, skin filters, product feedback (structured) and openness to complaints (relevant response).

Authenticity can be assured by batch verification, information provided by authorized sellers, tamper evident packaging and constant claims. The same ingredient, safety and usage information should be communicated via different channels.

Clearly, the price, stock, delivery and return should be provided for conditional consumers. It is transaction specific – there may be risk that the sale may be lost rapidly if there is any difference in touchpoints.

8. Limitations and future research

This study was a cross sectional study, which was a self-reported behavioural study. If transaction data and click stream / loyalty data were used for better behavioural validation.

The sample was not randomly drawn and geographically limited to North India. Be aware of any extrapolation of other regions and countries.

The analysis available does not provide for cross-classifications of webroomer segments and showroomer segments at the respondent level which would enable segmentation of respondents by webroomer only, showroomer only, webroomer/showroomer and non-switcher segments. The four segments can be developed in the future and can be virtually modelled.

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Further testing should take place in switching, depending on the product category, price, familiarity, sensory need, speed of delivery and return policy and authenticity certification. Experimental and longitudinal designs may be used for determining causality.

There should be a distinction in further work as to the channel used for discovery, information, evaluation, transaction, fulfilment and post-purchase service. Two unidirectional behaviours could be supplanted by a sequence analysis.

A paper on multinomial channel choice is also based on the same doctoral data. To be considered as a shared data source, there must be a high degree of data source diversity and minimal text/tables overlap. If the analytical results are different, the standards for publication transparency are met, as long as there are many different data sources or very few data sources do not overlap in text and tables.

9. Conclusion

The process of herbal cosmetic is not a one-way channel process but is a cross channel process. Almost half of the respondents indicated that they engaged in webrooming and nearly a third indicated that they engaged in showrooming. At each channel, two-thirds used both channels, the same or some way at each channel. Contextual evidence for why consumers might spread their search, evaluation, and transaction tasks over touchpoints includes product quality, reviews, safety, and trust and convenience.

Digital channels provide validation from social and scalable information and comparisons. Physical channels provide touch, interpersonal validation and assurance. The management lesson is the journey should be managed so that value is added at one touchpoint that can be passed to the next touch point(s) in the journey. In this context, webrooming and showrooming can be understood as forms of cross-channel integration in which consumers use different touchpoints for different journey functions.

Declarations

Funding: The author received no external funding for this research.

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data availability: De-identified data supporting the findings may be made available by the author upon reasonable request, subject to institutional requirements and participant confidentiality.

Ethics statement: The research synopsis and safeguards were reviewed through the Research Degree Committee process of the School of Management. Participation was voluntary, eligibility screening was applied and respondent identifiers were excluded from the analytical dataset.

Author contributions: Nitin Anand: conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, interpretation, writing of the original draft, and review and editing.

Related manuscript disclosure: The doctoral dataset also supports a distinct manuscript focused on multinomial primary channel choice. The present article addresses webrooming, showrooming, situational switching and consumer-generated purchase priorities. The manuscripts use different research questions and analytical outcomes.

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